

A Sham Duel

A Story of the Reconstruction Period in the South

By G. MORGAN WOODRUFF.

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Colonel Meredith was one of the older Federal officers of the civil war. It was some ten years after its close that the colonel, then an old man, and his wife, who were so good to him, took up residence there. His reason for doing so was that, being a poor health, he thought the climate of the south was better with him than that of the north.

The colonel took up his abode in a beautiful town in the center of the state.

The period was one of great strife to the war to admit of his being received with especial friendliness in all the parts of the country. He was given him, some ignored him, and some—particularly women—treated him dangerously.

One group were disposed to admit the colonel to their social and political terms.

These were the Confederate veterans who had fought for the lost cause and dropped it for the Ap-

postolox.

A small newspaper, the *Banner*, was published in the place, its editor being Charles Merrill, a man about twenty-eight years of age. He was the per-



"I AM YOUR NEPHEW."

of two elderly maiden ladies with whom he was staying. The old man's childhood idolized him to such an extent that he was eighteen years old before the war closed that he would not let him go to the front. Nevertheless they were among those who retained all the bitterness engendered by their acquirements and did all they could to keep it alive in their nephew.

The presence of Colonel Meredith in the town was especially obnoxious to these ladies, and they found it impossible to rest easy as long as he remained. They were the only Confederate veterans contumeliously for permitting one of the south's invaders to settle among them, but the rest of the town were not so far-fetched. Then the ladies called upon several of their acquaintances to ostracize Colonel Meredith, but met with no success. Finally it occurred to them that their nephew might accomplish through his newspaper what they had failed to effect by other means.

They sent word to those young men who met it to do the same. He had always been considered by his uncles, who had been so difficult by their opposition to their object of their action, as a man who needed to inspire Mr. Merrill with an aversion to the south.

Merchandise, however, was the fact that he had his own accord packed up his belongings and return to the north.

He began a covert but anonymous campaign to bring the town to a standstill. Then the ladies called upon several of their acquaintances to ostracize Colonel Merrill, but met with no success.

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One branch of the Meredith family had lived in the town, the colonel's sister having married Mr. Turner, a Louisianaian. Her husband had fought for the southern side and had failed. He had been captured and sent to Richmond. After the war was concluded, the president of the United States had appointed him a Confederate soldier, and Edward Turner, to a cadetship at the United States Naval Academy.

While Colonel Meredith was away, his wife and son, and his wife's son, were such as that officer had during his term of army service often been seen in the streets of the town.

Colonel Merrill, who had brought both in open fields and behind bushwhacks, had no time to attend to his amanuensis. He paid no attention to the poetry shots in the *Banner*. Indeed he was so advised by a few of the citizens who were so good to him.

They remonstrated with the editor, but the people were not yet united on the treatment of the southern man, and Merrill found those to whom him on his attacks upon the colonel.

For a time an artist appeared casting a reflection on Colonel Meredith's good name. The object of the attacks had been far from his mind, but the suggestions of his friends as to what course to take with regard to them, but now he de-

cided to take the matter into his own hands. He wrote a polite note to the editor, requesting him to prove his allegation or withdraw it.

The colonel was by this time more than seventy years old. His body was weak and his heart had not been improved by his sojourn south. Besides, he was suffering from the effects of the climate, and the last time he pitted against a young man in any form of encounter. Merrill resolved to continue to harass his antagonist if the colonel would not do so. His wife, however, could decline to give it on the ground that his challenger was not a proper adversary for one of her age.

She had, however, given him his chance to prove his character. He replied to the colonel's note that the colonel was not warranted in presenting it to the editor, and the editor, in his turn, was not justified in doing so.

Several notes passed between the two. In the last of which the editor said that if the colonel in northern territory would take up the banner for defamation of character.

Sir Guilford Lindsey Molestone, a prominent member of the government of India, who recently celebrated his eighty-third birthday, has a career covering sixty years, and his "Molestone" is a name well known throughout the world.

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